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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1859  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1242  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BISHKEK 000502

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SCA ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER TO BISHKEK

REF: BISHKEK 399

Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) During a series of meetings on April 11, SCA Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher urged the Kyrgyz Government to move forward on constitutional reform and said that the U.S. is eager to begin the next round of negotiations on Manas Coalition Airbase. He also expressed concern over the April 9 election of organized crime figure Ryspek Akmatbayev to Parliament. A/S Boucher pushed the Kyrgyz to support Guatemala's candidacy for the UN Security Council and the Foreign Minister pledged Kyrgyzstan's support. During his meeting with President Bakiyev, President Bakiyev urged the U.S. to move faster to complete talks negotiations over Manas Airbase. Bakiyev downplayed concerns over rising crime and corruption, and said that the process of constitutional reform is moving forward. During his separate meeting with A/S Boucher, Prime Minister Kulov admitted that he and President Bakiyev do not agree on many aspects of constitutional reform, but added that they both agree on the need for a new constitution that enshrines real checks and balances. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) While in Bishkek A/S Boucher met with President Bakiyev, Prime Minister Kulov, Foreign Minister Jekshenkulov, civil society members, key opposition leaders, and students from the American University of Central Asia. He also provided two interviews with local TV/radio outlets -- one translated into Russian and one in Kyrgyz.

MANAS AIRBASE: BAKIYEV URGES U.S. TO GET MOVING  
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¶3. (C) President Bakiyev grew animated when raising the negotiations over new terms for the Coalition Airbase at Manas. Repeating talking points made to Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense MacDougall (reftel), Bakiyev noted that

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in 2001, while he was Prime Minister, Kyrgyzstan demonstrated its goodwill in providing land for the airbase. While no one was thinking of money following the tragedy of 9/11, the base

has operated since on a "nearly free basis" and has provided few economic benefits to the country. Bakiyev complained that although numerous teams of U.S. experts have visited, the Kyrgyz Government has yet to receive a clear response in ten months despite providing detailed answers to USG questions. Bakiyev said that while he understands bureaucracies everywhere move slowly, he perceived a lack of will on the part of the U.S. to move quickly. A/S Boucher assured Bakiyev that the U.S. hopes to send negotiator Bob Loftis in June, if not earlier, and another expert group would be coming to Kyrgyzstan soon. The A/S confirmed that the airbase remains a major symbol of bilateral cooperation and U.S. commitment to the region and the fight against terrorism.

14. (C) Mumbling into his notes (which he received only after the meeting began), Foreign Minister Alikbek Jekshenkulov, in a separate meeting, stated that the "presence of a U.S. air base was a mandatory condition for maintaining security" in Kyrgyzstan. He noted that Kyrgyzstan's desire to renegotiate the base's terms was only due to economic needs and asked that the negotiation process be accelerated.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM: WE'RE MOVING FORWARD

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15. (C) President Bakiyev said that criticism of the slow pace of constitutional reform was misguided. He described progress to date and said the task at hand now was to determine the form of government and then move forward with changes to the constitution. He claimed that parliamentary critics seeking quick changes did not understand the differences between the forms of government. He expressed hope that an educational campaign being carried out on

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several levels would allow the people to truly understand the different forms of government and make an informed choice in the fall. A/S Boucher offered U.S. assistance in helping to get the message out, as well. Bakiyev defended the timing of the referendum on the form of government, saying that the agricultural season will be over by then and more citizens would be able to participate. He noted that a working group has already started drafting a new constitution. Bakiyev hoped that the new constitution would be like the United States,, and not need further amendments for another 20-30 years. A/S Boucher listened politely, and then pressed again on the need for constitutional reform, reiterating that whatever system the Kyrgyz adopt should have strong checks and balances.

16. (C) In his 45-minute meeting with A/S Boucher, Prime Minister Kulov noted how his views differed from those of President Bakiyev regarding which future form of democratic government Kyrgyzstan should adopt. While stating that both he and the President support a system of checks and balances that ensures no return to authoritarianism, Kulov pointed out, "I have made proposals that would bring our views closer." Kulov likewise said that both leaders understood the impatience of Kyrgyzstan's civil society for political reform, and stressed that for him, this only emphasized the importance of completing constitutional reform this year. Kulov also asked for U.S. assistance on judicial reform and educating the parliament on how other legislatures around the world work, perhaps by sending Kyrgyz parliamentarians to other, more developed democracies. During dinner parliamentarians themselves said that they welcome U.S. assistance on technical issues surrounding constitutional reform as well as American encouragement to the Kyrgyz Administration to move the process forward.

BAKIYEV: "THE PARLIAMENT IS ALREADY FULL OF CRIMINALS"

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17. (C) In all three of his bilateral meetings, A/S Boucher expressed concern over the recent election to parliament of

organized crime figure Ryspek Akmatbayev. A/S Boucher noted that there is concern outside of Kyrgyzstan that the prospect of a criminal entering parliament indicated that progress from last spring was losing momentum. While the U.S. will continue its assistance programs, there will be long-term consequences to the image of Kyrgyzstan that will hurt investment and other international activities.

¶18. (C) President Bakiyev responded by stating that there are many current deputies who should be in jail, so Ryspek Akmatbayev would not be a unique case. He then claimed that it wasn't right to label (the twice convicted) Akmatbayev a criminal, because "only the courts can determine if someone is a criminal." He also argued that the case against Akmatbayev was not very strong, recalling that then-Procurator General Azimbek Beknazarov told him that Ryspek was probably only guilty of 50 percent of the accused crimes because the police attributed many unresolved crimes to him while he was wanted. (Note: Given his long rap sheet, this still makes Ryspek a very dangerous criminal. End Note.) Bakiyev stated that only the courts can make the final decision on Akmatbayev's candidacy and that he believed there were still honest, uncorrupted courts here. A/S Boucher responded that executive branch also has a responsibility to ensure that the constitution and laws of Kyrgyzstan are upheld, and that Akmatbayev was the first criminal to take a seat in parliament after the March events. &People need to stand up on the right side of this issue,8 A/S Boucher stated. The court decisions, he noted, raise questions about the independence of the courts.

¶19. (C) During his meeting, Prime Minister Kulov expressed no such confidence in the judicial system, and said that an overhaul of the criminal justice system was sorely needed. In a reference to mobster Ryspek Akmatbayev, Kulov expressed

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muted dissatisfaction with Bakiyev's leadership, saying, "Today, with the aid and support of the courts . . . criminals are achieving their goals." He added that it was the Parliament, "under the President," that should have the authority to maintain judicial transparency. Kulov also admitted that over the past year, criminal elements had indeed gained influence in the political process and over certain politicians.

¶10. (C) Foreign Minister Jekshenkulov indicated that Kyrgyz diplomats were also concerned about the recent election to parliament of Akmatbayev, though he avoided citing Akmatbayev by name. He said that "criminal elements" in the country were powerful and that the Kyrgyz government was not in a position to use "strong measures" against them. Opposition parliamentarians also told A/S Boucher that Akmatbayev is not the only crime and corruption problem in the Bakiyev Government. They pointed to the increasing control of members of the Bakiyev family in the government and business sectors.

MCA: WE'LL GET IT DONE  
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¶11. (C) Foreign Minister Jekshenkulov thanked the U.S. for selecting Kyrgyzstan for the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Threshold Program and expressed hope that his country would eventually qualify for full MCA assistance. He described the details of their recently accepted concept paper, which focused on reforms of the judiciary, Procuracy and Ministry of Interior police force. He noted that a special working group had been formed and was presently working on drafting a full proposal for MCA Threshold Program Assistance that is due on May 15.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE  
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¶12. (C) Bakiyev urged the U.S. and other donors to focus

assistance on speeding up Kyrgyzstan's economic development. He argued that creating jobs and new businesses would do more than anything else to combat extremism and narcotics trafficking.

¶13. (C) Minister Jekshenkulov expressed interest in the Trade and Development Agency (TDA) sponsored regional energy conference planned for June in Istanbul. He asked that additional information on the conference be sent to him. He also agreed with the importance of developing regional cooperation and trade, and noted that the Kyrgyz were ready to participate in the rebuilding of Afghanistan by selling the country building materials.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY FRUSTRATED AT LACK OF PROGRESS

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¶14. (C) During their one-hour meeting with A/S Boucher, four representatives of civil society expressed deep concern and frustration over the lack of democratic reform since last year's "Tulip Revolution." They said that President Bakiyev had failed to live up to his campaign promise to pursue constitutional reform. Participants also expressed concern over the increased visibility and role of organized crime in government. Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society President Edil Baisalov vowed to organize demonstrations and protests around the country to pressure the government to move forward on reform (NOTE: On April 8, the Coalition was a primary organizer of a 2000-person march in Bishkek against organized crime. On April 12 Baisalov was attacked, presumably because of his activities. See Reftel. END NOTE)

¶15. (C) Elnura Osmonalieva, head of the national Student Union, said many young Kyrgyz are losing hope in the future and are leaving the country. She said that the April 9 election of mob boss Ryspek Akmatbayev to parliament "killed

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the hopes of many young people" and had severely damaged people's confidence in President Bakiyev. She added that Bakiyev continues to enjoy strong support in the south, but only because he is a fellow southerner and not because he had accomplished anything of note.

¶16. (C) In response to a question from A/S Boucher about what the U.S. can do to help, participants urged the U.S. to put more pressure on President Bakiyev to "live up to his campaign promises." In a separate meeting with Parliamentarians, opposition leader Karabekov told A/S Boucher that given the performance of the Bakiyev Government he was embarrassed over his participation in the March 24 revolution. He said that he has publicly apologized to his electorate.

#### GUATEMALA/VENEZUELA CANDIDACY FOR THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

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¶17. (C) A/S Boucher pushed Foreign Minister Jekshenkulov to support Guatemala's candidacy for the UN Security Council. Jekshenkulov replied that Kyrgyzstan had made a decision to support Guatemala.

¶18. (U) This message was cleared by the SCA Front Office.  
YOVANOVITCH